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September 25, 2002

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Regents Enrollment Management Research Report Throws Light On College Attendance Decision Process

Baton Rouge – Board of Regents members received an overview of the findings from a statewide market research project today conducted by enrollment management firm Noel-Levitz to assist in Master Plan implementation. The results of the research, which included on-campus focus groups and statewide telephone surveys, provide valuable insights into the way Louisiana's college-bound high school students, their parents, and current and potential adult students evaluate Louisiana's postsecondary educational institutions during their college selection process.

Among the general findings of the research were the following:

Louisiana parents and students place a premium on program accreditation in making college choice decisions.

- “Program accreditation” as a desirable feature was mentioned by 20% of the high school students, 30% of the parents and 10% of the adults. The research firm noted that this public concern for program accreditation was somewhat unique, as they seldom receive this response when conducting college choice surveys throughout the nation. Other features sought by Louisiana students and parents in the college selection process were affordable tuition, quality academic resources and facilities, and availability of the academic program of interest to the student.

Louisiana parents and students were more apt to be interested in colleges within a two-hour drive from home.

- High school students and parents mentioned “close to home” most often as a feature they were looking for in a college. Louisiana high school students were more likely to restrict their choices to schools close to home than their counterparts in other states.

The Noel-Levitz survey also tested the information sources used by parents and students to inform their college choice decisions.

- High school students and their parents ranked print publications (brochures, pamphlets) as their top information choice. High school counselors and internet websites were also rated highly. Louisiana students were more likely to obtain information from print publications than students in other states the firm has surveyed.

In other findings, compared to ratings by college-bound students in other surveys, Louisiana high school students place more importance on campus safety and security and less importance on financial aid availability and scholarship opportunities.

In addition, the survey found that because adult students in our state tend to enroll in the institutions nearest their homes - with which they are already familiar - they gather little additional information in making their college choice decision.

The on-campus research, which resulted in the development of the survey instruments, was comprised of two student focus groups and one faculty focus group at each of the state's 13 four-year universities. The telephone survey component included surveys of over 1000 college-bound high school students (78% from Louisiana and 22% from bordering states), 500 parents of college-bound high school juniors and seniors (81% from Louisiana and 19% from bordering states), and 400 adults either enrolled in college (27%) or considering enrolling (73%). Research was conducted between April 28, 2002, and July 22, 2002.

The research was conducted by the nation's largest enrollment management firm, Noel-Levitz, to provide statewide and campus-specific data to assist in student recruitment as part of the state's Master Plan efforts.

Deputy Commissioner Jimmy Clarke pointed out the value of this information: "This research is intended to inform and assist campuses in establishing their enrollment plans. How better to tailor an individual campus enrollment plan than by directly gauging the decision-making criteria of the population from which the student body will be drawn?"

Noel-Levitz is currently working with all Louisiana institutions to design and strengthen campus efforts in marketing and student recruitment. Efforts to address student retention will begin next month. All these initiatives are designed to drive the full implementation of the state's Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education, which has a focus on increased student access and improved student success.

In other Master Plan action today, Regents members approved additional policies regarding the

minimum admission criteria including the establishment of the high school class rank criteria for students entering four-year institutions. Regents also approved admission policies for international students, transfer students and out-of -state students under the new policy. The full implementation of minimum admission criteria will take place at all public four-year institutions in Louisiana by Fall 2005.